



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

John E. Murphy, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On the web: www.usdoj.gov/usao/twx/index.html

Daryl Fields, Public Information Officer
(210) 384-7440

July 13, 2011

**FORMER COLUMBUS, NEW MEXICO MAYOR PLEADS GUILTY
IN FEDERAL FIREARMS TRAFFICKING CASE**

United States Attorney John E. Murphy announced that 51-year-old Eddie Espinoza, former mayor of Columbus, NM, pleaded guilty to federal charges in connection with a firearms trafficking investigation.

Appearing yesterday afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge William P. Lynch in Las Cruces, NM, Espinoza pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy, three counts of making false statements in the acquisition of firearms and three counts of smuggling firearms from the United States.

As a result of his guilty plea, Espinoza faces up to ten years in federal prison for each of the smuggling counts; up to five years in federal prison for the conspiracy charge as well as each of the false statement charges. Espinoza remains in federal custody. No sentencing date has been scheduled.

The investigation was conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) with assistance from the Comandante Chihuahua State Police in Palomas, Mexico and the Secretariat of Public Security in Juarez, Mexico. The U.S. Marshal's Service, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, New Mexico State Police, Las Cruces Police Department, El Paso Police Department as well as other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies also provided assistance during the investigation. The case is being prosecuted by District of New Mexico Assistant United States Attorneys Nathan Lichvarcik and Michael Nammar.

#####